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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: SENAD UNDER POLITICAL FIRE

¶1. (SBU) Leading daily ABC Color ran a series of articles from August to December 2007 alleging administrative irregularities within Paraguay's Anti-Narcotics Secretariat (SENAD). Two former SENAD administrators (Brunilda Salomon and Federico Cabral) were alleged to be involved in administrative misconduct for not following acquisition regulations (conducting unjustified direct purchases) and for receiving kick-backs from vendors. Salomon was separated from SENAD; she plea-bargained her case. Public prosecutor Arnaldo Guizzio opened an investigation of Cabral in December 2007 and formally accused him of failing to follow acquisition regulations (related to SENAD's contracts with four separate food vendors) and of receiving kickbacks. Cabral was also separated from duty; the criminal case against him is ongoing.

¶2. (SBU) ABC Color ran a second series of articles in mid-March, repeating the previous allegations and asserting new ones. ABC charged that SENAD officials improperly submitted duplicate purchase orders for food in January and February 2007. One vendor, Marina del Sol, made a cash payment of three percent (USD 633) of the awarded contract to Miguel Angel Aveiro as head of SENAD's cafeteria. The investigation is ongoing and no formal indictments have been made. On March 28, ABC Color asserted yet another charge -- that Cabral forged documents to justify operations that never occurred; that case is also pending investigation. Given the new allegations, Paraguay's Comptroller General may open an investigation.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: The latest string of articles repeats previous (somewhat flimsy and unfounded) allegations, and the new charges appear to be more a political tactic to discredit SENAD as part of President Duarte's administration than an effort to root out corruption. (NOTE: ABC Color is widely viewed as anti-Colorado. END NOTE). Another theory is that a disgruntled former employee (unhappy with SENAD's Minister Ibarra) may be the source of the allegations. In any case, Ibarra continues to cooperate with all investigations and has promised to quickly address any corruption issues. If the Comptroller General investigates SENAD, Ibarra has promised it unlimited access. The Ambassador has stated publicly that the Embassy's cooperation with SENAD will continue, and that the Embassy trusts that if there has been any wrongdoing, the Public Ministry (which the Embassy also supports) will uncover same during its investigation. END COMMENT.

CASON